EGoM has decided that the price basis/formula submitted by M/s RIL-NIKO under Article 21.6.3 of the PSC for valuation of natural gas may be accepted with modifications.

Financial assistance for conservation of monuments in A.P.

*67. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals received in the Ministry from Andhra Pradesh Government for financial assistance for the conservation of monuments of historical/cultural value, indicating the location-wise details of each project;

(b) the estimated conservation cost of each monument;

(c) the status of these proposals and funds allocated/released so far for each of these monuments; and

(d) the reasons for delay in clearing these proposals?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) No such proposals have been received by the Ministry of Culture. However, Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has received a proposal from Government of Andhra Pradesh for Development of Golkonda-Qutub Shahi Complex, which includes Hakimpet, Shaikpet Sarai, K.B. Museum and Premamathi Mosque, located in Hyderabad. The estimated cost of this project is Rs. 600.85 lakhs out of which the Central Component of Rs. 500.00 lakhs and the State component is Rs. 100.85 lakhs. In addition, a proposal has been received by MoT for Conservation and Development of City College Building at Hyderabad for an amount of Rs. 278.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

(c) and (d) Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has sanctioned the Central component of Rs. 500.00 lakhs for the development of Golkonda-Qutab Shahi Complex in 2006-07 out of which an amount of Rs. 400.00 lakhs has already been released. The proposal of City College Building is under consideration. There is no delay in clearing the projects.

Shortage of LPG connections in Himachal Pradesh

*68. SHRI RAJNITI PRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a shortage of LPG connections in the country for a long period;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when it would be solved;

(c) whether it is also a fact that in the State of Himachal Pradesh, particularly people of Jubbal-Kolkhai Rohru and Chirgaon Tehsil are facing lot of difficulties, as this area is hilly and rural; and

(d) if so, by when these problems would be solved?

THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) and (b) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have not reported any shortage of LPG connections in the country. As on 1.10.2007, OMCs are serving 979.8 lakhs LPG customers through their 9355 LPG distributorships, out of which 12.12 lakhs LPG customers and 120 LPG distributors are in the State of Himachal Pradesh. OMCs have released 27.7 lakhs new LPG domestic connections in the country during April-September, 2007.

OMCs have reported a waiting list of only 68813 in certain States/Union Territories as on 1.11.2007 for release of new domestic LPG connections with their LPG distributors because of backlog in supplies due to road breaches, floods, natural calamities and strikes which are beyond the control of the OMCs. This waiting list is expected to be liquidated by 15th December, 2007.

There is no waiting list for new domestic LPG connections in the State of Himachal Pradesh as on 1.11.2007.

(c) and (d) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have reported that at present, there is no overall shortage of LPG in the country, including the State of Himachal Pradesh and LPG supplies to distributors are being made by the OMCs through indigenous production and imports in accordance with the genuine demand of customers registered with the LPG distributors.

Opening of branches of Indian Banks in USA

†*69. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA is not giving permission to Indian Banks for opening branches in their country;

(b) if so, the steps being taken by Government to tackle this situation; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Out of the applications of three Indian Banks for a branch licence in the United States of America (USA), the Federal Reserve Board of the USA has recently approved the proposal of ICICI Bank to upgrade its Representative Office into a Bank Branch. The other two proposals of State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) for opening additional branches in USA have not yet been approved.

(b) and (c) The delay in SBI and BoB obtaining a licence for their additional branches in USA has been taken up by the Government and the Reserve Bank of India with their counterparts in the USA.

Fund managers for the New Pension Scheme

*70. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have selected the fund managers for the New Pension Scheme, and if so, the details thereof and the criteria for the selection of such fund managers;

(b) whether it is a fact that the selected fund managers do not have the requisite data of the corpus collected since January, 2004;

(c) what steps are being taken to facilitate expeditious collation of pension data by the fund managers; and

(d) what is the estimated return accrued since January, 2004 when the corpus was not being managed by any fund manager?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Three sponsors of pension funds *viz.* State Bank of India, Life Insurance Corporation of India and UTI Asset Management Company have been selected by PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority), through a process of competitive bidding, to manage the pension corpus of Government employees under the New Pension System (NPS). The selection was based on the criteria

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.